

# OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

JUSTICE AND POLICY

OF

REGULATING

THE TRADE IN CORN.

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BY JOHN DAYMAN.

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*(Written in 1814, and republished in November, 1847.)*

ORIGINALLY DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO THE  
RIGHT HONORABLE WILLIAM HUSKISSON.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE "Observations" which are here republished were written in the autumn of 1814 and published early in 1815, during the discussions which took place previous to the passing of the Corn Bill of 1815. They were approved by the late lamented Mr. Huskisson, (as may be seen by his letter to the author, a copy of which is subjoined,) and were thought at the time to have had a considerable share in convincing the public of the necessity of the measure they advocated.

My first intention was to have thrown what I had to say into a new form; but as the same causes which produced the events of 1813, 14, 15, 16, and 17, are again in operation, and will, I firmly believe, be attended with similar results, I have deemed it more advisable to retain the original text, making only a few trifling verbal alterations and adding some short explanatory notes: by adopting this course the reader will be enabled to see the main arguments for and against a Corn Law when the question was agitated thirty-three years ago, and I have the satisfaction of at least shewing

my own consistency, be it right or wrong,—a rather rare quality in these enlightened days.

One thing at least is certain : under the operation of the Corn Laws the manufactures, trade, shipping, agriculture, wealth, and population of Great Britain have advanced with a steady but constantly accelerating pace. The effects of Free Trade in Corn, Provisions, &c. on all interests remain to be seen ; but that they will result in a return to the principles of Protection to native production or in a Government insolvency, I have little doubt.

JOHN DAYMAN.

*20th October, 1847.*

N.B. The additional Notes are distinguished by numbers.

## DEDICATION.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE WILLIAM HUSKISSON.

SIR,

*Although it be unusual to dedicate the fleeting political works of the day, yet the following pages are humbly inscribed with your name, not under the idea of their possessing sufficient intrinsic merit to deserve your attention, but as the only mode their author has of publicly testifying his high respect for and admiration of that enlightened policy, and those comprehensive and statesmanlike views, so often displayed by you in the career of public life; and, among many others, on the Bullion question, and the Corn Laws.*

*Whatever may be the fate of this pamphlet, I shall not regret having written it, since it has afforded me an opportunity of recording the obligations I, in common with I trust the majority of my countrymen, feel to a Statesman who has exerted all the faculties of an enlarged mind, in advancing the interests and promoting the glory of England.*

*I am, therefore,*

*Sir,*

*Your very obliged*

*And obedient servant,*

*J. D.*

FEB. 1815.

COPY.

Whitehall-place,

12th March, 1815.

Sir,

*During the agitation of the Corn Bill in the House of Commons, and the still greater agitation which it excited out-of-doors in the metropolis, I could not find leisure to offer you my very sincere thanks for your publication on this subject.*

*To the Dedication\* (if it were allowed me to say anything respecting it,) I should only object that it ascribes to me merits and acquirements which I do not possess. To all your other sentiments and opinions on the matter which you have discussed I give my unqualified approbation, and can only hope that the spirited and perspicuous manner in which you have illustrated the true principles which ought to govern our policy with respect to agriculture, will tend to remove existing prejudices, and to reconcile the body of the people to a system not less essential to their individual comfort than to the safety and well-being of the State.*

*I remain, &c.*

W. HUSKISSON.

J. DAYMAN, ESQ.

\* Mr. Huskisson did not see either the Pamphlet or the Dedication before they were published.

# OBSERVATIONS,

ETC. ETC.

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THE Corn Bill, which is about to be brought before Parliament in the present session, whether viewed with friendly or hostile eyes, being one of the most important measures now, or perhaps ever, submitted to the consideration of the legislature; and having occupied, and still continuing to occupy, a very large portion of the public attention, it appears desirable that the subject should be placed in as clear a light as possible, and with this view my humble aid is offered in the following pages.

It will hardly be disputed but that if mankind were to consult their real interests, a completely free trade throughout the world would be for the mutual advantage of all; but experience has shown that, however desirable such a state of things, and however beautiful the theory that supposes it possible, may be, yet that until all men can be made to comprehend their true interests, (i. e., until they can all be made fair and honorable, good and virtuous,) states and individuals must protect their subjects and themselves against the encroachments

of their neighbours, in the one case by the enactment of prohibitory and restraining laws, and in the other by the precautions of prudence; and upon this principle it is that all the proceedings of the different states of Europe which abridge the freedom of trade have been framed. (1 )

The two greatest objects of human care are food and raiment; and all wise governments will undoubtedly pay every attention to the commerce in those indispensable necessities; giving every encouragement in their power to the produce of those articles at home, and depending as little as possible on external resources: for no country can be said to be independent, the inhabitants of which do not by some means or other feed and clothe themselves.

If this proposition be true, then the manufacturing\* and trading part of the population, and the

(1) This is not the place to discuss the great questions of political economy, (which, however, I hope to do at no distant day,) but I would merely remark in passing, that the whole system as maintained by its modern advocates rests on the assumption, that men's actions and pursuits are the results of the operations of their *reason*, whereas the direct contrary, namely, that they are the results of the operations of their *passions*, is notorious.

\* I have, throughout these observations, made use of the terms *Manufacturing* and *Manufacturer*, as distinguished from *Farming* and *Farmer*, though the latter be, strictly speaking, also a manufacturer; but, as the terms are commonly used in different senses, they seem sufficiently accurate for a work of this transient nature.



cultivators of the soil, are mutually dependent on each other ; and their interests so completely interwoven, that whatever tends to advance the prosperity of one, must in a proportionate degree benefit the other, and that neither can be injured without the other suffering ; for it appears to me as contrary to reason and the experience of all ages, and the whole tenor of history, to imagine that any country can become populous, civilized, powerful, and great, without commerce, by which an influx of wealth is obtained, and so capital furnished, as to suppose trade and manufactures can continue to flourish, and the state support its station among the nations of the earth, without the aid of husbandry applied to increase the productions of its soil, and thereby to provide food for the commercial and manufacturing part of its population, who cannot raise any for themselves.

The objections which have been made to passing an act for laying a duty on Corn imported from abroad, seem to have arisen from a misconception of the case. They may be divided into two heads : first, the injustice, and second, the impolicy of the measure. But if it can be shewn that there is neither the one nor the other in the case, that such a step is both just and politic, I am sure the good sense of the people of England will not only acquiesce in, but forward an object, in the attainment of which all classes are equally interested.

The opponents of the Corn Bill say, that it would

give a complete monopoly to the English farmer, of the main article of sustenance, by preventing all competition in the market, and thereby enabling him to raise the price of Corn to any pitch he might think proper, without the possibility of control ; and enrich him at the expense of all the other classes of the community—a manifest act of injustice, inasmuch as they are all entitled to equal advantages. Besides, say the opponents, during the late war the farmers have been accumulating wealth from the profits of their occupations, and therefore they may now, at the return of peace, be supposed well able to live on the fruits of their former advantages ; at all events, they must have laid up sufficient to meet the present exigencies ; and as all things naturally soon find their proper level, it would be extremely unjust in the legislature to interfere for their peculiar advantage, to the injury of the rest of the community.

(2) Now all this would be quite fair and reasonable, were there no such things as prohibitions and

(2) It will very probably be said, in allusion to the arguments in this section, that the amended Tariff, as it is called, of Sir Robert Peel, has answered them ; but nothing can be more fallacious than such an assertion. The Tariff only *lowers* the duties on the importation of the foreign articles of manufacture which it enumerates, whereas the duties on the importation of all the articles of food, raw or manufactured, such as are raised by the British farmer, are altogether abolished, and they are admitted to unlimited competition with native produce in the British markets.

protecting duties on the importations of foreign commodities, similar to the articles produced by the industry of the manufacturing and trading classes ; but while the Spitalfields weaver and the Nottingham hosier, the manufacturer of Manchester cottons and the Sheffield plater, the clothier of Yorkshire and the Staffordshire potter, the serge-maker and the shipowner, the Irish linen-draper and the grower of West India rum, and I believe the practisers of every other art, mystery, manufacture, trade, and handicraft, known or used in these realms, with the single exception of the growers of Corn, are each and every of them protected and secured, and justly, wisely, and properly protected and secured, either in the complete monopoly or the decided preference in the home market, by absolute prohibitions or heavy duties on foreign or alien articles of produce ; surely it is neither unjust nor unreasonable to ask for the English farmer the same paternal care, the same protecting hand which Government has so judiciously extended to his brethren of other occupations ; to request that he may be placed on the same footing as his neighbours, by such a duty being laid on the foreign article as shall at least secure him, not a monopoly, but a fair remunerating price for the produce of his industry and the interest on his capital. Should this, however, be thought too much, if it be said there must be a free trade in Corn and provisions, in order to enable the manufactures of England to compete with those of other

countries, then let the farmers of England also have a free importation of foreign manufactured goods and colonial produce, of spirits, teas, iron, and all the great articles of their consumption; in fact, let all duties on importation be done away with; on those terms, I venture to engage for them they shall never again trouble either the Parliament or the public with a complaint or a murmur. The farmers of England, any more than their commercial and manufacturing brethren, are not excelled (perhaps not equalled) in enlightened views, talents, skill, and industry, by any husbandmen in the world; and let them be placed on equal terms, let the same freedom from burdens (necessary, but still burdens) exist in England, as in other countries, they shall enter the lists with any foreigners whatever, in our own or any other markets, and render their Corn at as low rate even as the Polish noble with his vassal serfs. All that is demanded for them is a "clear stage and no favour." But if, when the unavoidable necessities of the state have imposed burdens on the people, (of which the owners and occupiers of land have cheerfully borne their full share,)—if, when every article of a farmer's consumption is doubled, trebled, or even quadrupled in price, his corn and cattle are to be beaten out of the home market by importations from countries where no or few public imposts exist, and in which, from various causes, the price of labour is so low as to allow Corn to be raised almost for nothing, while the manufacturer

and colonist, fostered and cherished by the legislature, and fortified and secured by prohibitions and duties, have no competitors, the consequences must be apparent to every unprejudiced eye; the farmer must sink under the unequal contest, his capital must be quickly annihilated, his fields remain uncultivated, and the nation, consequently, become literally and absolutely dependent on foreign importation alone for the supply of its daily bread. If it be objected, (as before stated,) that the farmers have no need to be in a hurry to obtain relief, that their profits during the war have filled their pockets sufficiently to enable them to bear a little extraordinary pressure at the present moment, and that things ought to be left to find their level, let those who so reason look into the evidence\* (which is or

\* It has been objected to this evidence, that, having been principally obtained from farmers, landholders, and agents employed by them, it deserved but little attention, being *ex parte*, and furnished by persons interested in the success of the proposed measure; but it may be asked, from what other source could the information wanted have been obtained? Would the objectors have had the committee call for calculations on the expense of raising wheat in Britain from East India directors or West India planters—from bankers in Lombard-street or master-weavers in Spital-fields? What would have been said, if, when the question of relief to the West India colonies was under discussion, the House of Commons had called up a half-score hop-growers from Kent and Sussex? or when the orders in Council and the Nottingham riots were before them, they had directed a few farmers from Mid Lothian and Norfolk to attend and state their opinions for the

may be in everybody's hands) given during the last session of Parliament to the committees of the Lords and Commons ; and they will there see, that for many years past it has been impossible to raise wheat in England under a price varying from 80s. to 96s. (3) per quarter ; and I conceive, taking the average of crops and seasons, even the latter price would not pay £10 per cent. on capital ; that the expenses of cultivation and requisite capital have so

guidance of the House? In all cases of parliamentary inquiry, the persons most qualified to give information, from their acquaintance with the peculiar circumstances under which they themselves are placed, must be resorted to, in order to ascertain the state of any given case. All that can be done by Parliament is to select the most enlightened and unprejudiced individuals in the different departments ; and as most public committees consist of members both hostile and friendly to the objects for which such committees are appointed, it may be safely concluded, that all evidence which comes through their hands has been well cross-examined and sifted to the bottom.

(3) The reader will be pleased to bear in mind that the calculations throughout the pamphlet are made in the depreciated paper of the day, which depreciation varied from 30 to 40 or even more per cent. ; thus 64s. per quarter for wheat at the present metallic currency is about equal to the 96s. above alluded to. It is devoutly to be hoped that no Government of this country will ever again under any emergency, or however pressed from without, yield to the dreadful fallacy of an inconvertible paper currency ; the domestic misery which ensued on the return to cash-payments, a measure which after all was the only remedy for a disease brought on by the empiricism of political quacks, was, I verily believe, greater in England than that which, with all its sanguinary horrors, the revolution produced in France.

much increased, as to affect as well the landlord as the occupier; for that formerly about one-third of the gross produce was considered as a fair rent for land, but that now not more than from a fourth to a fifth, and in some cases less, is deemed an adequate rent; and that, consequently, neither the landlord nor his tenant have had the means of making such profits as have been supposed, and are therefore no more able to bear an unusual pressure for any length of time than any other set of people: indeed, from my own knowledge and the information I have been able to obtain from every source, (and I have sought it wherever it seemed likely to be found, both verbal and written,) it appears indisputable, that the interest on capital employed in agriculture has been uniformly less than on that of trade or manufacture.

As to the remark, that matters should be left to find their own level, that brings us again to the question of all the parties being put on the same footing. What would the silk weavers and the West India planters say\* to a proposition for things finding their level, which was to commence with a repeal of the duties on French silks and foreign brandies? Or the Manchester manufacturers, to one which set out with a free importation of foreign chintzes, cambrics, and calicoes? The fact is, that in the present state of society, with all the compli-

\* What do they say now, November 1847?

cated relations which a very advanced state of civilization has introduced, matters *cannot* be left to find their own level; but, that as occasions have occurred, which rendered it necessary for different states to enact laws for the protection and encouragement of such parts of their population as were engaged in certain pursuits; so, as often as fresh circumstances happen to render other parts of the people liable to injury, or in want of encouragement, the same means must be resorted to, and all the members of the state be placed on equal grounds; and if this were not from time to time to be done, the whole fabric of society must be destroyed.

In truth, much less is asked for the British farmer by the proposed Corn Bill, than is already possessed by every other class of the community; for all foreign and alien manufactures are either prohibited, or such heavy duties imposed on their importation, as to enable the British subject to afford his article at a much inferior price, and still obtain a fair return for his skill and capital; whereas the proposed Corn Bill would admit an importation of Corn, at a moderate duty, as soon as ever it should have reached a price barely remunerating the grower; and when the price (certainly an insufficient one, in bad seasons, to pay the grower the prime cost) should have exceeded a certain limit, the duty to cease entirely, and a free importation to be allowed: a mode of proceeding totally unparalleled, I believe, in the legislation of this



country, and affording the Corn grower less encouragement, or even protection, than any other class of men in the state.

Having thus, as I hope, shewn a bill for preventing the importation of Corn, unless at such a rate as shall secure the British farmer a fair remunerating price for his skill and capital, to be neither more *unjust* nor unreasonable than the acts which prohibit or restrain the importation of other foreign articles, the introduction of which might interfere with the interests of the manufacturer, the trader, or the colonist, and that the bill proposed last session was even less favourable to the farmer than the existing laws are to every other class of people, I proceed to consider the second part of the question, viz. the policy of such a measure.

The act for laying the duty on the importation of Corn should have been differently titled, say its opposers: it should have been called "An act for perpetuating the high price of provisions in Great Britain," and thereby striking at the root of its commercial prosperity, inasmuch as it is impossible for arts, manufactures, and commerce long to flourish in any country, where the moderate conveniences of life are, by their dearth, denied to its trading and manufacturing population; for how will it be possible for the wares and manufactures of England, when the wages of workmen are enhanced by the price of provisions, to be brought into foreign markets in competition with the goods

of countries, where the cheapness of food enables them to be produced at far inferior rates? If, therefore, a Corn Bill, which should secure to the farmers such a preference in the home market, as is proposed, should be passed, the natural consequences would be inability in the English master manufacturer to give, and in his workmen to earn, sufficient wages for the support of themselves and families in England to enable them to compete with foreigners in the markets of the world; the manufacturers will therefore emigrate, and carry their capital, skill, and knowledge with them; by which the present decided superiority of Great Britain, in arts and manufactures, will be soon transferred to other nations; and thus a death-blow be given to its prosperity, by the removal to other regions of one of the greatest sources of national wealth. The obvious and best policy therefore of England, so far from taking any measures to enhance the price of provisions, must be to lower it, and with that view to give every facility to the importation of articles so essential to her prosperity.

It cannot be denied that, in order to the prosperity of a nation, the higher classes of manufacturers must receive a sufficient return to remunerate them for their capital, skill, attention, and risk; and that the wages of those who are employed under them, must be such as to enable them to procure the comforts of life properly incident to their situation. Any long-continued interruption, on

these points, must produce the transfer of capital, and the emigration of manufacturers. But it may be well to consider how far the proposed alteration of the Corn Laws in England will cause either the one or the other.

By the evidence given before the House of Lords, it appears that, in the manufactories of Lancashire, Glasgow, Wiltshire, &c. almost the whole of the manufactured goods are the produce of piece work; and that during the years 1800, 1801, 1812, and 1813, when the price of provisions was higher than at any period, on an average, of the last twenty years, the articles were rendered at a much lower rate than in years when provisions were much cheaper; and it has been accounted for on this principle, that in the former case, from a general stagnation in the trade, and the want of employ, the operative was obliged to work extra hours, at even inferior wages; but that in the latter, from an increased demand for labour, and a consequent increase in wages, so far from being obliged to work even the regular hours, he could earn in four days, not only sufficient for the support of himself and family for the week, but something over, (which, it is to be feared, was too generally spent at the ale-house or gin-shop.) Now, though no person, with the common feelings of humanity, can wish for a revival of the severe and bitter times of 1800 and 1801, (in which, by the by, farmers got less,

notwithstanding the high prices, than in years of fair average,) yet, even for the interest of the whole body of manufacturers themselves, masters as well as men, it must be desirable that there should be some rational proportion between the amount of wages and the prices of provisions. Every one who knows any thing of the nature of trade, must be well aware, that the working class of manufacturers, (operatives as they are now called,) in the event of a permanent reduction in the price of provisions, would not be benefitted one tittle, inasmuch as their employers would reduce their wages to the average standard price of the necessaries of life at the time ; the benefit, if any, would result solely to the master manufacturer; but he, as I hope presently to show, would not be a jot better off than those he employs; for who, after all, are the principal customers to the manufacturer for his goods? I have not the means of referring to the returns under the Population Act, but I think I may venture to affirm, that one-half of the population, and I am pretty sure full one-half of the property, of this kingdom are engaged in the culture of, or derive their means of support from, land. Now if one-half of the property of England be annihilated, and one-half of its population be reduced to beggary, (which must, as I think I have before shown, be the case, unless the English cultivator of the soil be equally protected with the

manufacturer,) what will become of all those manufactures which this half of the population and wealth were in the habit of taking off? where will they find a market? will it be on the continent? and, if so, will the returns be so regular as those of the home trade, and particularly that part of the home trade which may be considered more especially agricultural? While on this part of the subject, I wish to ask, and “I ask for information,” what sort of returns have been *received* for the vast shipments to the continent, since the opening of the ports, and how have those vaunted speculations turned out? If any person, capable of informing us on this head, should think it worth his while to answer these observations, I shall really and sincerely be obliged by his throwing some light on this hitherto obscure subject, as we have at present no means of obtaining it. For, should the magnificent prospects of trade with the European continent have ended, or end, in a manner something similar to those which opened on our heated imaginations, when the British first occupied Buenos Ayres, (and I really am unable to see how they should be otherwise, when the ravaged and impoverished state of Europe at this moment is considered,) it may be worth while to reflect, whether our manufacturers may not just as well retain the humble but certain pay of the farmers and country gentlemen of England, as of the no-pay or little-pay, but much-promise adventurers of the continent.

(4) I shall now endeavour to show, that the proposed bill for regulating the importation of Corn, under certain duties, so far from operating to perpetuate the high price of that article, would have a direct tendency to keep it at a moderate and steady one. On this point, however, I shall be as brief as possible, because it has been often stated more ably than I can do it. No article whatever will continue to be produced in considerable quantities, which does not leave a fair profit to the producer, much less will it be brought into existence at a certain loss. Now I again refer to the evidence given to the two Houses, and to every agricultural publication of the last seven years, for statements of the actual expense of raising Corn in England; and from those it will be found, that wheat cannot be afforded at less than the rates before stated, (viz. from 80s. to 96s. per quarter;) if, therefore, *that* grain fall much below those rates, it is evident it will cease to be raised; and, should it cease to be raised, or should there be even a partial stoppage of the tillage, the natural consequences must be a scarcity, and with scarcity dearth; for were we, under such circumstances, to import all the surplus

(4) It is not the object of this reprint of the pamphlet of 1815 to enter into details; but the reader who wishes to see how far the anticipations contained in the original publication have been realized, is referred to the Government tables of the averages up to the time of the sliding scale, and indeed up to the time of the total cessation of all restriction.

Corn of Europe, our necessities being known, the price would consequently be raised on us in every country to which we might resort. No one will doubt but that the Corn-factors of Dantzic and Lubeck, of Hamburg and Holland, of France and America, would know the price of Corn in Mark-lane, before the agent from England made his purchase. If this view of the subject, therefore, be correct, it seems much better that Corn should be sold at a steady price, and such as will induce the English farmer to raise it, and thereby produce a regular supply for the English market, than that, from a discouragement to its growth in this country, the danger of famine, or at least the certainty of excessive prices for foreign Corn should be incurred.

But notwithstanding all this, say the opponents, if the Corn Bill pass, and provisions consequently continue high, however just all the reasonings in its favour, yet the emigration of the manufacturers, one of the greatest evils to be apprehended, will undoubtedly take place, because mankind will naturally seek the situations where they can live in the most comfort, with the least labour. Now that there will be emigrations of manufacturers to the continent, in consequence of the passing of the Corn Bill, (should it take place,) I have no doubt; there have certainly been emigrations already, and more there will be, let there be a Corn Bill or not; but it may be well doubted, whether, notwithstand-

ing the violent alarm which has all at once seized our commercial population, the trading and manufacturing capitalists of England will readily exchange the security of their insular situation and English laws, for the liability to invasion, and openness to arbitrary exaction, which form so prominent a feature in the situation of most continental states. Supposing, however, that, in consequence of a bill, securing to the British farmer a remunerating price for his produce, an emigration were to take place, such emigration could not, in the nature of things, be very extensive at once ; because manufacturing capital, as connected with machinery, is perhaps one of the most difficult of transfer ; time would therefore be given for the passions to cool down, and matters would (to use the fashionable term,) “ find their level.” But is there no danger that, if the fair and reasonable protection which all other classes of the subjects of these realms enjoy, be refused to the husbandmen of Great Britain, *they* may not emigrate, and carry *their* skill and capital with them ? I know (because I have heard it from hundreds of mouths) such an emigration is considered of no consequence, as the farmers are estimated at nothing, by a large proportion of the other classes ; but such opinions, being utterly destitute of reason for their foundation, can have no weight with persons wishing to view every question in all its bearings. Those who look into the history of past ages will not fail to see that the shepherd



states have conquered the agricultural ones, and the agricultural the commercial. The introduction of fire-arms and the progress of civilization, indeed, have fortunately rendered rich and civilized countries an overmatch for poor and barbarous ones; but still the best materials for armies are to be found graduated as before stated. Those therefore who regard nations with statesmen's eyes will perhaps think that, if a part of the population of a country must emigrate, it may, on the whole, be better for the superfluity to be poured from a commercial than an agricultural source; in the present instance, the disproportion of emigration between the two classes of husbandmen and tradesmen would be very greatly otherwise; because the tradesman, being completely protected in the home market, at least as many as would be necessary to supply that market, and also for a short time the foreign one, would remain; but the farming population, having no protection, must emigrate immediately. I do not, however, think that any emigration whatever of either class is necessary; for I am well convinced, that with Corn at 96s. per quarter, British manufactures can, on an average, be sold in every part of Europe 20 per cent. cheaper than they can be rendered by any other nation. I know this last observation is only an assertion; but I call on those who controvert it, to shew its incorrectness, by statements Dr. and Cr. of the cost prices of the various articles of their

trade. Farmers have done so, (how wisely I will not pretend to determine,) and their statements have been for many years past annually before the public. Let the manufacturers do the same, and the public may be then able to form some judgment between the parties. (5)

There is another point in the policy of this question, which regards the relative interests of the parties, at which I have before hinted, but which deserves to be somewhat more enlarged on ; I mean the consumption by the agricultural population of manufactures, and articles of foreign trade. Now, I presume, it will be allowed, that the proprietors and occupiers of land take off an immense proportion of the above articles ; if, however, the rents of one, and the profits of the other, diminish

(5) It will here be probably objected, that however pertinent the arguments of the last few paragraphs might have been to the state of things in 1815, they are totally inapplicable to 1847 ; that English manufacturers have emigrated with their capitals and machinery, that manufacturing industry is rapidly spreading itself over the civilized world, and in fact, that none of the evils anticipated have happened. To this, I reply, that a profound peace for thirty-two years throughout Europe, a fact unparalleled in modern history, could not have been contemplated when the " Observations" were written, and that it still remains to be seen what the effect will be when a general continental war breaks out, an event by no means unlikely to happen at no very distant date, according to present appearances, when the truth or fallacy of these predictions will be tested.

in such a rate as to leave the both without the means of purchase,\* and that a price under from 80s. to 96s. per quarter for wheat will do so, cannot be doubted by any one who will take the trouble to examine the case, how can it be possible for these consumers to continue their usual purchases? How will they find money to new decorate their own baeks with the clothes of Yorkshire and Wilts, or set off the well-turned ankles and tapering necks of their daughters with the snowy hosiery of Nottingham, or the cashmerian shawls and gossamer fabrics of Norwieh and Spitalfields? No, they must of necessity return to the fearnought coats, blackyarn stockings, and russet gowns of their aneestors; and, though I doubt not that thousands think such habiliments full good enough for the farmers, I am not so clear the said thousands will be so well pleased with the total cessation of demand from their old customers, the country shopkeepers. (6)

\* I have thought it useless to enter into a series of calculations on the expenses of cultivation, as they may be found in every agricultural publication; the reader, if he wish to see such calculations, is referred to the farmers and agricultural magazines, transactions of the Society of Arts, transactions of the Board of Agriculture, county reports, Mr. Arthur Young's works, reports of the committees of the Corn laws, and perhaps fifty others.

(6) Although the Corn Bill intended for the protection of British agriculture passed in the session of 1815, yet so violent had been the impetus of the blow given to that agriculture by the events of the two preceding years, that it did not reach the lowest point of depression, until two or three years after the

Such appears to me to be the real state of the question respecting the Corn Laws, considered merely

passing of the Act intended for its relief. Great and manifold were the privations and sufferings of the tillers of the earth during that period; noble was the fortitude with which they bore up against their adverse fortune, and sublime was the spectacle of a whole class voluntarily foregoing, not only the simple luxuries and comforts fairly compatible with their station, but almost the necessaries of their humble life, rather than incur debts for the payment of which no means were apparent. At that time I resided at Tiverton, formerly one of the principal seats of the serge, and since and still that of the lace manufacture, and I well remember the exultation manifested by the tradesmen of the town at the prospect of cheap provisions, and of the lowering of the pride of the farmers. Well, they had their desire; wheat fell to 6s. per bushel, and meat to  $2\frac{1}{2}d.$  and  $3d.$  per lb. and even less, and this too paid for in the depreciated paper currency, (I was myself cognizant of the fact, of two legs of Exmoor mutton, decidedly the best mutton known, weighing 13 lbs., having been bought for 1s. 6d.,) with a proportionate fall in all other articles of farm produce. Meeting one day with a linendraper, I congratulated him on the fact of his being able to find his family in food for "next to nothing." "Zonnds! Sir," said he, "I have nothing to find them with; formerly, during the dear times, the farmers' wives frequently spent £8, £10, £15, and £20 a-piece at my shop, now I never see the face of one of them inside my doors. I wish wheat were 12s. a bushel and meat 11d. a pound." I could mention a dozen anecdotes of the same kind; the natural consequences followed, a complete stagnation in the home market, and a consequent misery of the operative manufacturers. That a repetition of the same calamities is imminent, there can, I think, be no doubt in the minds of those who remember the past. Individuals sometimes gain wisdom by experience, nations scarcely ever.

as affecting the relative interests of the two great classes of society, landed and commercial. But there is a third and more important view of the subject, in which both parties are equally interested : what effect a continuance of the existing state of things will have on the revenue. It is not, I apprehend, pretended by any of the most strenuous opponents of the Corn Bill, that the farmers of England, with their rents, rates, taxes, wages, and all expenses at the same rate they now are, can grow Corn at the present prices. The landowners therefore have been loudly called on to lower their rents, for the general benefit of the community. Now, setting the injustice of the demand out of the question, what would be the effect of all the landed rental of England being reduced to one half of its present standard ? Why the expenditure of the landed proprietors must also fall to one half ; one half of the landlord's duty on property, one half of the landowner's assessed taxes, and much more than one half of the indirect duties which he pays on articles of his consumption, on his malt, spirits, wine, tea, sugar, soap, candles, salt, and a long list of *et cæteras*, down even to his pinch of snuff, must all be sunk, annihilated at a blow. Where would the government find a substitute for such an immense defalcation ? It would therefore be the height of folly, as well as injustice, if it were even possible, to carry such a reduction into effect. It may be here just observed, by the way too, that such a mea-

sure must also diminish to one half the demand for all articles of trade or manufacture, from those classes whom it would immediately affect, (a number far beyond the mere landowners themselves.) But it is useless to argue on a state of things which can only take place in a very limited manner ; for an immense proportion of the lands in Britain is held under leases for terms, which have many years yet unexpired, and very few landlords will be found disposed to lower their rents according to recommendation : if so, the burthen must be thrown on the tenantry, who, it is allowed, by all the rational part of the community, are unable to bear it ; a general bankruptcy of this class of people therefore would ensue ; the consequences of which would surely be tremendous beyond any thing ever witnessed in this country : for should a general failure of farmers take place, (and that it must do so, unless parliament in this very session afford them relief, I have very little doubt, as it will be impossible for a very large proportion of them to weather another such year as the last,) their Corn and Cattle will be seized and sold at half value, to pay taxes and rent ; the estates will be abandoned, or delivered up to their owners, who will be unable to find tenants, the agricultural capital having been previously dissipated or destroyed ; the lands therefore must remain unoccupied and uncultivated, producing neither revenue to government, nor food for the population ; derangement of the finances and famine

then naturally follow ; and when once the deficiencies in the Exchequer render the government unable to meet the demands of the public creditor, and the scarcity and high price of provisions have wrought up the passions of the lower orders almost to madness, a nation may be well said to have reached one of the terrible crises of its fate. At such a crisis, it is my firm opinion, the British empire will have arrived in less than four years, unless some steps be taken to protect the farming interests, and place them on a level with those of the other classes. That parliament will immediately adopt such steps can scarcely be doubted. It is impossible to believe that popular clamour, unsupported by argument, can influence enlightened statesmen to prefer the temporary advantages of the moment to the permanent interests of the state, and much less to refuse the equal measure of justice to every condition of men alike ; I therefore firmly trust, that the Corn Laws will be placed on a just and equitable footing, as well in mercy to those who have so loudly petitioned against all interference with them, but who will be ultimately the greatest sufferers, as in justice to those who feel the immediate pressure.

Having thus briefly stated the arguments for and against a Corn Bill in the best manner I am able, I can only regret that such excellent materials as the subject afforded had not fallen into the hands of a better workman ; but viewing the subject as one of the

most momentous interest, and believing its issue to involve the very existence of the State, I considered it a duty to offer my humble mite towards the removal of objections and prejudices to a measure, the success of which seemed of such vital importance.

Whatever the manufacturing and commercial part of my countrymen may think to the contrary, I am as true and zealous a friend to their interests as to those of the cultivators of the soil, and for the plain reason stated in the commencement, that I know the interests of both to be precisely alike, and their mutual prosperity so completely interwoven, as never to be separated. No man lamented more than myself the times when calicoes, which cost 1*s.* 6*d.*, were selling at 1*s.* per yard; and on the same principle, I grieve to see wheat which cost 12*s.* per bushel, selling at 7*s.* My object has been to convince those who will take the trouble to read my book, that both justice and sound policy require a regulation of the trade in provisions, as well as in that of other commodities. A great number of collateral arguments, in favour of the propositions I have endeavoured to sustain, naturally suggested themselves, but my object was to compress the question within as narrow a compass as possible, and merely to adduce a few of the fundamental, and, as they appear to me, irrefragable arguments in favour of the Corn-Bill; for a great book is a great evil to nine people out of ten, and



perchance not unfrequently rather tiresome to the tenth.

(7) It was suggested to me to republish these observations when Sir Robert Peel first broached his Free-trade principles and total repeal of the Corn-laws, but the madness of the public mind was at that time so great, that there was not the smallest chance of any calm view of the question meeting with attention. Now, however, when the consequences of those measures are beginning to make themselves seen and felt, when we have a deficient revenue, and are threatened with an inconvertible paper currency, a sure prelude, I firmly believe, to a Government insolvency, I think a brief summary of the arguments pro and con cannot but be acceptable to those who have not leisure to peruse all the debates which took place on the measures proposed and carried by Sir R. Peel, and I hope this little work will be found to contain the pith of them.

28th October, 1847. The Ministry have given way, and we have commenced the downward run—have placed our foot on the first step of the descent to the Hall of Eblis.\*

“ Facilis est descensus Averni;  
Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,  
Hic labor, hoc opus est.”

Which, as the Baron of Bradwardine says, may be well rendered

“ 'Tis easy to go down to old Nick,  
But to get up again 's the trick.”

\* Vide the Caliph Vathek.

THE END.

## Collected citations

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